

THE YEAR IN REVIEW



U.S.D.A. FOREST SERVICE
EASTERN REGION

2003



Randy Moore
Regional Forester

FROM THE REGIONAL FORESTER

The story of the Eastern Region is one of restoration and resiliency. Once known as “the lands nobody wanted,” national forests in the East are now vibrant ecosystems that we use and enjoy.

Looking back on 2003, the Eastern Region made many important strides in caring for our natural resources and serving people who use and depend on them. Throughout the East, Forest Service employees continued to protect threatened and endangered plants and animals, restore degraded lands and watersheds, and provide first-class recreation opportunities for growing numbers of visitors.

We continued revising our existing forest plans, the documents that provide long-term vision and guidance for each national forest. We appreciate the participation of the public, who have been instrumental in helping draft a consistent framework that will keep our forest plans contemporary.

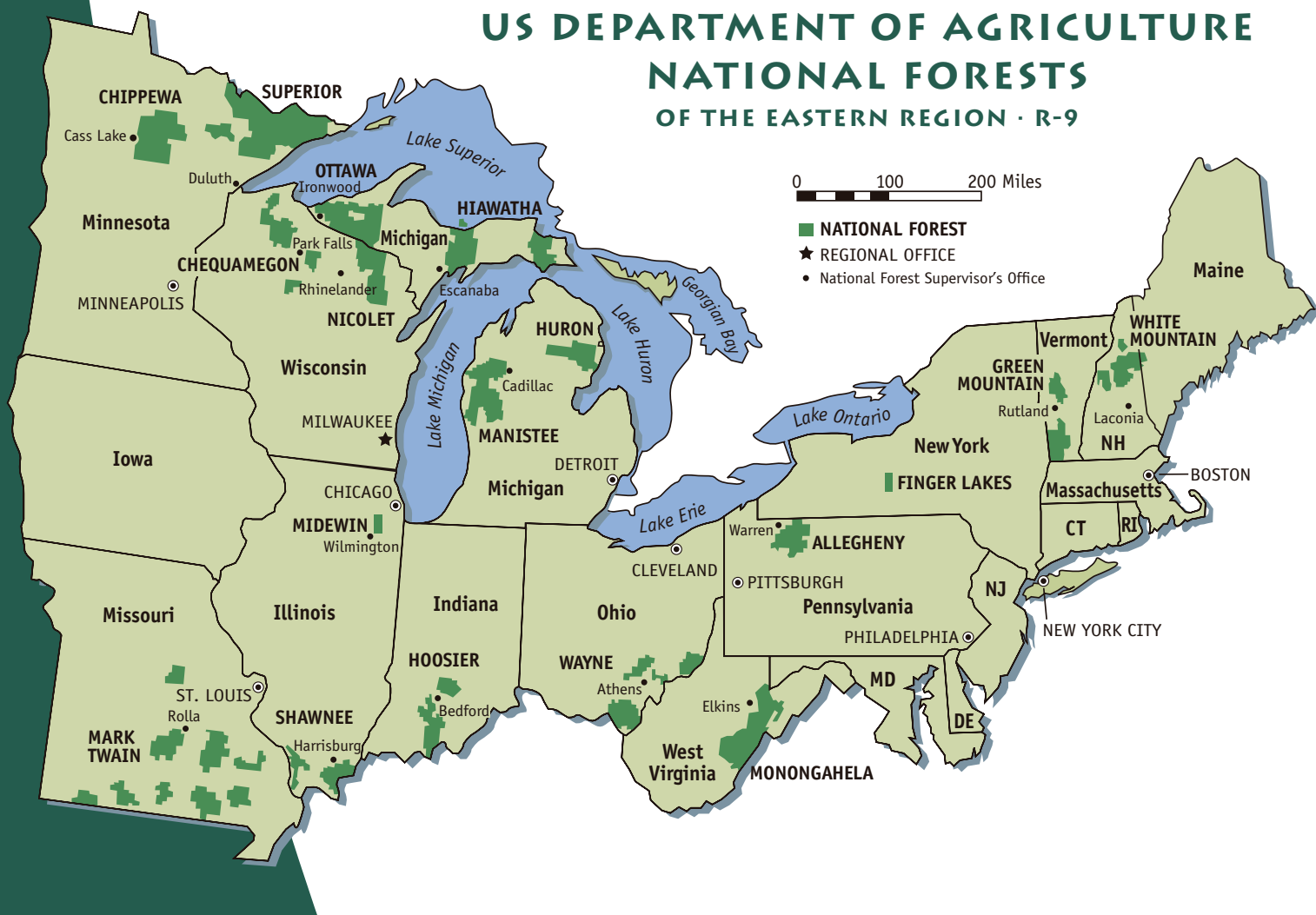
We stepped up our efforts to combat dangerous fuel buildups, completing projects from Minnesota to West Virginia, and as in past summers, sending critical resources and personnel to support firefighting efforts in the West. Managing vegetation—especially where homes are close to a national forest—remains one of our top priorities.

Our success is due in no small part to the extraordinary efforts of our many partners. Working side-by-side with our employees, concerned groups, and individuals provided millions of dollars in both time and matching funds that enabled us to complete critical work. We salute their spirit, and look forward to building upon those relationships.

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US DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE NATIONAL FORESTS OF THE EASTERN REGION · R-9



PROTECT THE NATURAL RESOURCES ENTRUSTED TO US.

OUR ACTIONS IN 2003

to protect the national forests of the East and Midwest benefited the land where protection is needed most—on the ground and into the future. We preserve the habitats that constitute each of our national forests, and work to eliminate threats to the plants and animals that live on these lands. In this way, we provide sustainable natural resources for today and tomorrow, and we ensure the health of the twelve million acres of public land entrusted to us throughout the East and Midwest.

Forest resources are more than just the things we use. Sometimes they are things that we were or things that we are. We protect aging heritage sites on national forests to keep our history alive and provide a clearer picture of who we are today.

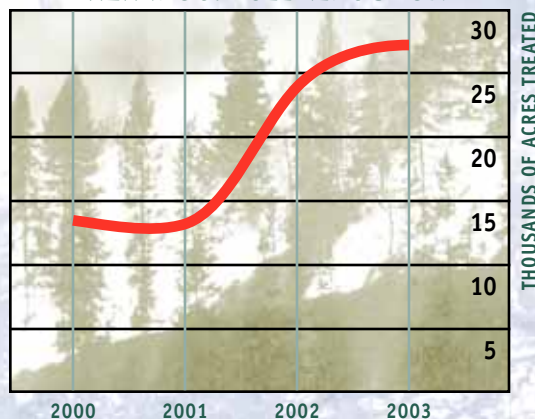
Managing natural resources is a public effort. As we work to complete our revised forest plans, the public continues to contribute valuable thoughts and ideas. Together, we share a vision for protecting our public lands.

FIRES AND FUELS

Reducing hazardous fuels is a critical task. Many homes and neighborhoods border on vegetation that burns intensely and rapidly. In cooperation with federal, state, tribal, and private partners, the Forest Service uses timber operations and controlled, low-intensity fires that mimic naturally occurring wildfires to reduce concentrated fuels that could otherwise be fodder for catastrophic wildfire. These efforts encourage new tree growth and mitigate the effects of disease and insects in the forest.



HAZARDOUS FUEL REDUCTION



FOREST PLAN REVISION

Creating high-quality updates to our existing forest management plans in roughly two years is one of our top priorities. With substantial support and input from the public, employees, and leadership, we are well underway. By the end of 2003 all 14 forests in the Eastern Region were working on forest plan revision. Four forests officially began their revision process by

publishing a public notice of intent: the Allegheny, Huron-Manistee, Hiawatha, and Ottawa. Three forests—the Chippewa, Superior, and Chequamegon-Nicolet—published their draft environmental impact statements and proposed revised forest plans, and are close to issuing final decisions after incorporating public comments.

SECURING OPEN SPACE

Through purchases, exchanges, and donations, the Eastern Region acquired 8,339 acres of land in 2003. Land acquisitions help the Forest Service protect natural resources, and ensure public access for future generations. To ensure contiguous habitat, the Forest Service acquired 570 acres of privately-owned land adjacent to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (shown at right) in Minnesota's Superior National Forest.





Spiny water fleas displace plankton, a primary food for fish.

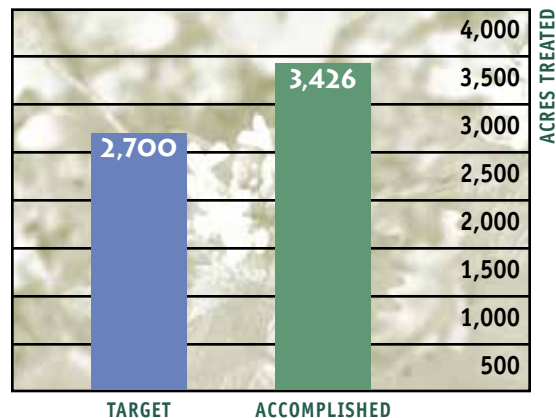


Garlic mustard has invaded every Eastern national forest.

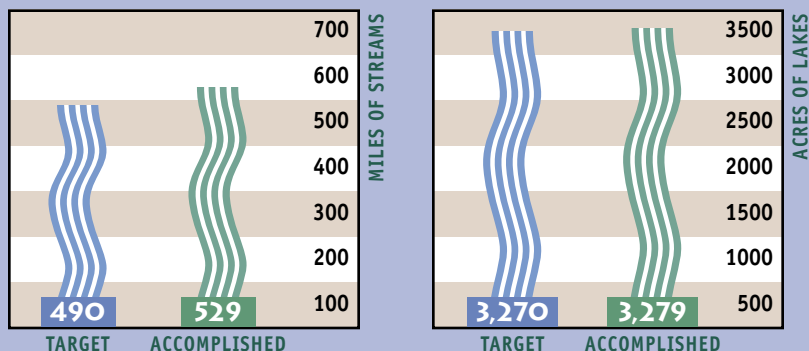
FIGHTING THE INVADERS

On more than 350,000 acres throughout the Region, unwanted, harmful, and often exotic or introduced plants and animals have been displacing desirable species native to the forests. In 2003, the Eastern Region increased its emphasis on controlling non-native invasive species (NNIS), bolstering its arsenal in the fight by developing a regional NNIS framework and designating NNIS coordinators on each forest. The framework provides guidance for prevention, early detection, control and management, restoration, and public education. The coordinators identify research priorities and potential partners, and develop training. Allied with active community, state, and federal partners, the Region continues to protect our forests from these threats.

CONTROLLING NOXIOUS WEEDS



FISHERIES HABITAT RESTORED AND ENHANCED



FISHERIES PROJECTS

In cooperation with partners, we restored and enhanced lakes and streams to improve both water quality and the habitat's unique features. Sixty-eight percent of the region's 15,339 miles of streams are trout waters. The Eastern Region hosts 28% of all fresh water fishing trips.

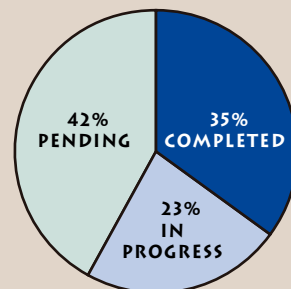
CONSERVATION ASSESSMENTS



Compiling information on sensitive species helps us maintain viable populations of these plants and animals and avoid trends that could lead to special protection under the Endangered Species Act. Assessments for more than half of the region's 665 sensitive species are in progress or have been completed.

Preventing loss of wetland habitats ensures viable Black Tern populations.

665 SENSITIVE SPECIES ASSESSMENTS



Authentic period dress brought history alive.



CELEBRATING THE 200TH ANNIVERSARY OF LEWIS AND CLARK'S JOURNEY

During the summer of 2003, the Eastern Region participated in *Corps of Discovery II*, a series of nationally-promoted and locally-sponsored community events in West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Indiana, and Ohio to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the Lewis and Clark expedition. In partnership with State and Private Forestry and Grey Towers National Historic Landmark, the Hoosier and Wayne National Forests hosted interpretive exhibits, conducted presentations, performed re-enactments, and developed special nature programs for school children. Approximately 20,000 American and international visitors learned about the original *Corps of Discovery* and the important role citizens play in conserving public lands.

RESTORE THE LAND TO CONSERVE OUR NATURAL HERITAGE.

WE HAVE MADE EXCITING progress in ecosystem restoration in 2003. The Canada lynx, listed as threatened by the US Fish & Wildlife Service just three years ago, is now being studied by scientists in Minnesota to learn more about its habitat. Meanwhile, with the invaluable help of volunteers, watershed partnerships have made impressive strides in New England and the Midwest. The White River Partnership in Vermont continues watershed improvement by collecting water quality data and monitoring stream temperature. In Ohio, new water treatments have steadily improved watersheds affected by past coal mining. At Midewin, the nation's only national tallgrass prairie, achieving new environmental clean-up standards to address both human health and ecological concerns will allow the future transfer of remaining acres of land from the US Army.

The Forest Service restoration of "the lands nobody wanted" has been called one of the most dramatic success stories of resource conservation in the nation's history. But the story isn't over. We continue to add new chapters as we work alongside neighbors and partners.



THREATENED, ENDANGERED AND SENSITIVE SPECIES: WHAT WE'RE DOING TO HELP

THREATENED & ENDANGERED SPECIES	FOREST SERVICE ACTIVITIES
MEADS MILKWEED & TUMBLING CREEK CAVE SNAIL	Recovery plans completed — Mark Twain National Forest (Missouri) & Shawnee National Forest (Illinois).
WOLF	Continued state and federal collaboration resulted in increased wolf population in Lake States national forests.
KIRTLAND'S WARBLER	Improved essential Jack pine habitat for recovery, treated future habitat— Huron-Manistee National Forest (Michigan).
KARNER BLUE BUTTERFLY	Improved habitat, surveyed for species presence — Huron-Manistee National Forest (Michigan).
WEST VIRGINIA NORTHERN FLYING SQUIRREL	Recovery plan underway — Monongahela National Forest (West Virginia).
AMERICAN BURYPING BEETLE	Environmental analysis for re-introduction in progress, soil suitability studies completed — Wayne National Forest (Ohio).
INDIANA BAT	Bat structures installed and storm-damaged trees analyzed for habitat — Allegheny National Forest (Pennsylvania).
PIPING PLOVER	Lakeshore nesting sites protected, and public information sharing — Huron-Manistee National Forests (Michigan).
REGIONAL SENSITIVE SPECIES	FOREST SERVICE ACTIVITIES
CERULEAN WARBLER	Conservation assessment completed, partnership opportunities identified — national forests in New England, Appalachia.
KARST SPECIES	Completed conservation assessments for 52 karst species — associated with limestone sinks, caves, and underground streams — Hoosier National Forest (Indiana).

CANADA LYNX IN MINNESOTA

Early in 2003, a group of scientists agreed to conduct a three-part study of the Canada lynx in the Great Lakes including habitat use; population distribution; and the extent of lynx movement between the US and Canada. With help from many partners, the Superior National Forest moved quickly to study how lynx use habitat in northeastern Minnesota. Eight lynx were trapped and fitted with radio collars to track their movements. Though two lynx were lost, the remaining six continue to be monitored. Once a lynx's location is determined, habitat features are identified and recorded. At the end of the study, the data will be analyzed to generate a habitat preference model that can be used by natural resource managers to plan projects that benefit the Canada lynx and to assess the impact of other work on this reclusive wild cat.



WHITE RIVER PARTNERSHIP: TAKING CARE OF BUSINESS



The White River Partnership of Vermont's Green Mountain National Forest is well known for "getting things done in the watershed," and the past year was no exception. In 2003, White River Partnership projects included in-stream restoration, riparian planting, and monitoring stream temperature and water quality. Nearly 400 volunteers worked on 70 different sites.

With rigorous staff work and countless hours of volunteer effort, the White River Partnership has developed into the highly organized and effective community-based watershed stewardship group it is today. This excellence was recognized with the FY 2003 Eastern Region's Riparian/Wetland Management Award. The White River Partnership continues to serve as a model for other watershed groups in Vermont and throughout the country.

MONDAY CREEK WATERSHED GROUP GOES WITH THE FLOW

Many years ago, coal mining took place in and around what is now the Wayne National Forest in Ohio. While much of the land has been restored, coal mining's bleak legacy lingers on with the drainage of acidic water into local watersheds. Concern about surface water pollution in southeastern Ohio was the catalyst for the Monday Creek Watershed Project, a group that has initiated more than 40 projects and garnered more than \$5,500,000 in state and federal funding over the last 10 years.

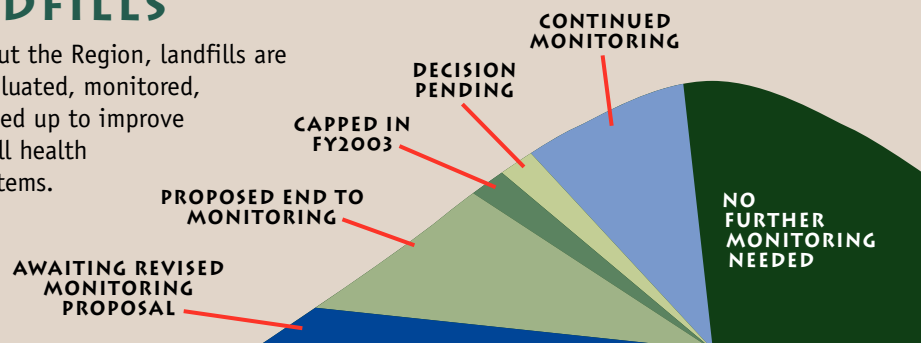
In 2003, the Monday Creek group funded almost \$900,000 in watershed improvement projects on the Wayne National Forest. Projects included treating acidic mine drainage to prevent further harm to aquatic life in local streams; closing collapsed mines to prevent further acid drainage and eliminate safety hazards; reconstructing stream channels that were modified earlier for coal production; reclaiming the land



beneath mounds of waste coal; and reducing stream acidity with doses of neutralizing solution.

LANDFILLS

Throughout the Region, landfills are being evaluated, monitored, and cleaned up to improve the overall health of ecosystems.



A CLEAN SWEEP FOR PRAIRIE LANDS

At the time of the initial land transfer in 1997, an agreement was made with the US Army to evaluate environmental clean-up standards for land that would become the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie on the site of the former Joliet Army Ammunition Plant near Joliet, IL. The clean-up standards were finally agreed upon this year, and provide protection for the land and for human health. The Army will now complete its environmental clean-up and then transfer the remaining land to Midewin. The first land transfers under this new agreement are expected to take place in 2006.

PROVIDE FOR PEOPLE, NOW AND INTO THE FUTURE.

OUR MISSION OF CARING

for the land and serving people is evident in our efforts to provide responsible forest management, public recreation, and a sustainable use of our natural resources. These national lands provide scores of lasting benefits. Many people depend on forest products for their livelihood and rely on shared revenue from timber, mineral, and oil and gas sales to support local schools and roads.

Last year, forest visitors in New Hampshire benefited from a stewardship contract that funded the construction of an interpretive Discovery Trail. In Minnesota, state and local partners teamed up to complete work on a bike trail through the Chippewa National Forest.

Our urban outreach programs are connecting city residents to their national forests. Although the East is home to nearly half of the national population, many urbanites are unfamiliar with the national forests that are only a few hours' drive from their homes.

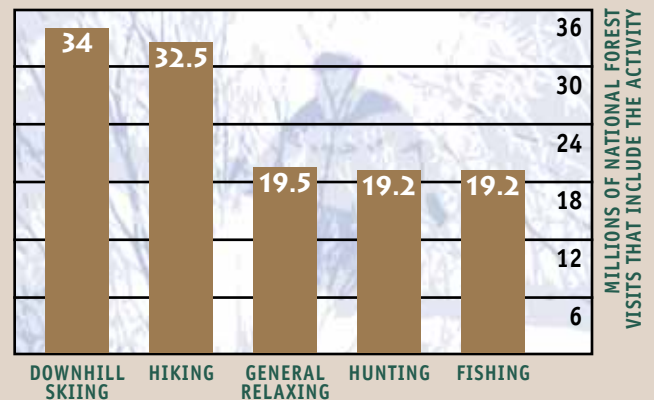
National forests are a rich source of renewable resources. They provide a sense of our cultural history, a connection to the natural world, and critical sources of energy.



RECREATION

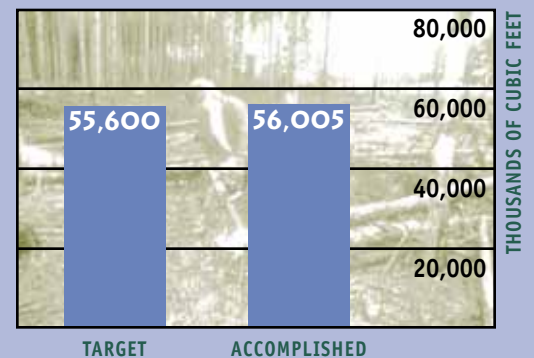
Visitors to our national forests enjoy a range of activities, and we have invested considerable resources to maintain and improve our recreation infrastructure. From trail and road upkeep to building lasting partnerships with community groups and other organizations, our goal is to provide a setting where visitors forge lifelong memories.

FIVE MOST POPULAR RECREATION ACTIVITIES NATIONWIDE



TIMBER SALES PROGRAM

National forests are one of our most viable sources for wood used in homes, paper, and many other products that people depend on every day. Each year the Forest Service identifies a quantity of timber to be made available for sale. Besides meeting desirable conditions for scenery, wildlife habitat, and recreation, timber sales contribute to the income of states and local communities. In 2003, shared revenues to states and local governments in the East totaled more than \$8.5 million.



STEWARDSHIP CONTRACTING

Stewardship contracting is a tool authorized by federal law for the next ten years. It is a different way for the Forest Service to package projects and enter into agreements with public and private groups to accomplish critical work. The intent of stewardship contracting is to combine the restoration and maintenance of healthy forests with our work in local communities. In 2003, a stewardship contract was instrumental in the building of an interpretive trail and bridge on New Hampshire's White Mountain National Forest.

PARTNERSHIPS

Accelerating changes in demographics, environmental factors, and economic and community values require new ways to build innovative connections between people and places. Last year, with crucial assistance from our partners, we successfully met our diverse management goals.

We marked the 15th anniversary of our “Passport in Time” program, where volunteers work alongside Forest Service employees on cultural heritage projects. On the Green Mountain National Forest in Vermont, volunteers from as far away as Oregon came to restore an old and nearly forgotten cemetery. On the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie in Illinois, 19th century farmsteads were uncovered and documented by scores of volunteers from both nearby and faraway states.

On the White Mountain National Forest in New Hampshire, a group of enthusiastic volunteers, led by the Timber Framers’ Guild, worked throughout the summer to reconstruct an original 18th century homestead. In Chicago, we partnered with the Lakeshore Marathon, handing out more than 1,100 trees to runners and another 2,900 to students in the Chicago Public School System. The platform of the event was based

on the health of people, forests, and communities.

Partnerships aren’t limited by international borders, as the Lake Superior Work Group and Lake Superior Forum demonstrated by initiating seven joint projects, totaling nearly \$1 million, to clean up Lake Superior and its ecosystems.

These—and many other valuable alliances—are instrumental in achieving much-needed restoration and improvement work throughout the East. Partnerships mean more than shared funds and resources; they illustrate a shared vision and commitment to our public lands and that we accomplish more by working with the people we serve.



Chicago children participate in the “web of life” during the El Valor Science and Technology Summer Camp at Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie.



CIVIL RIGHTS

Forest Service employees are committed to ensuring that all people are treated with dignity and respect. Our Civil Rights program in the East has proven to be an effective tool in meeting regional priorities and promoting workforce diversity. The cornerstones of the civil rights program are special emphasis programs that identify barriers to employment and advancement of underrepresented groups. The Student Career Experience Program (SCEP) is instrumental in providing students enrolled in college with valuable experience in their career field. In 2003, 39 students were enrolled in this program. Since 2000, 18 students completed the program and were hired for full-time positions.



Randy Moore, Deputy Regional Forester Ruth Voltz (left), Dr. Enrique Figueroa, and Civil Rights director Bettie Maultsby. Figueroa spoke to Regional Office employees for National Hispanic Heritage Month.

Credits: Fire photos on p. 3, National Interagency Fire Center. Spiny water flea photo on p. 4: NOAA, Great Lakes Environmental Research Laboratory. Garlic mustard photo on p. 4, Leslie Mehrhoff, IPANE. Canada lynx photo on p. 5, US Fish & Wildlife Service.



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